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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 VATICAN 004742

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DEPT FOR EUR/WE (MENNUITI), EUR/RUS, DRL/IRF

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/30/2007

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SUBJECT: HOLY SEE TO TAKE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM CONCERNS TO
OSCE: STRATEGY FOR RUSSIAN VISA RELIEF

REF: A. A) VATICAN 4657

[1](#)B. Q B) MOSCOW 13859

[1](#)C. Q C) VATICAN 3492

[1](#)D. Q D) VATICAN 3527

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CLASSIFIED BY: POLOFF GHFROWICK, REASON 1.5 (B), (D)

[1](#)1. (C) FOLLOWING THE HOLY SEE'S REBUKE OF RUSSIA BEFORE OSCE CHIEFS OF MISSION TO THE HOLY SEE FOR ITS SERIES OF EXPULSIONS AND VISA DENIALS TO CATHOLIC CLERGY (REF A), VATICAN OSCE DESK OFFICER TOLD POLOFF SEPTEMBER 30 THAT THE HOLY SEE PLANS TO SEEK REDRESS WITHIN THE OSCE FOR THE CANCELLATION OF VISAS AND/OR EXPULSION OF FIVE CATHOLIC CLERGY BY RUSSIAN AUTHORITIES. FM JEAN-LOUIS TAURAN HAS DECIDED TO PURSUE THE ISSUE IN THE OSCE BY INVOKING ALREADY AGREED OSCE AND UN LANGUAGE FROM DECLARATIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM. IN DOING SO, THE HOLY SEE HOPES TO AVOID SINGLING OUT RUSSIA FOR FAILINGS SHARED BY A NUMBER OF OTHER MOSTLY FORMER SOVIET OSCE MEMBER STATES. THE HOLY SEE BELIEVES THE RUSSIAN VISA REFUSALS AND EXPULSIONS HAVE CREATED A &REAL OBSTACLE FOR PEOPLE TO EXERCISE THEIR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN RUSSIA TODAY.8 END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) HOLY SEE OSCE DESK OFFICER MONS. ETTORE BALESTRERO OUTLINED FOR POLOFF SEPTEMBER 30 THE HOLY SEE,S OSCE-BASED STRATEGY TO PRESSURE RUSSIA TO REVERSE A SERIES OF RECENT VISA DENIALS AND EXPULSIONS OF CATHOLIC CLERGY (REFS C AND D). THEY ARE SEEKING RUSSIAN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF ITS COMMITMENTS ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AS LEVERAGE TO GET RUSSIAN AUTHORITIES TO ISSUE THE CATHOLIC CLERGY ENTRY AND VISAS THEY HAVE RECENTLY DENIED. BALESTRERO TOLD US THE HOLY SEE INTENDS TO PURSUE THE CASE IN THE OSCE, INITIALLY AT THE OCTOBER 4 PC IN VIENNA. THEY HOPE TO GAIN AGREEMENT THERE TO PURSUE A DECLARATION REAFFIRMING FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM TO BE ISSUED AT THE PORTO MINISTERIAL IN DECEMBER. THE HOLY SEE CONSIDERS THE RUSSIAN GOVERNMENT'S

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VISA REFUSALS AND EXPULSIONS AS SERIOUS RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ISSUES THAT HAVE CREATED A &REAL OBSTACLE FOR PEOPLE TO EXERCISE THEIR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN RUSSIA TODAY.8 AT THE SAME TIME, BALESTRERO SAID HE DIDN'T DETECT ANY ANTI-CATHOLIC SENTIMENT IN HIS RUSSIAN INTERLOCUTORS AT THE WARSAW HUMAN DIMENSION MEETING, BUT HE ENCOUNTERED THE SAME COMMENT REPORTED REF A -) THAT THIS WAS A MATTER FOR THE HOLY SEE TO WORK OUT DIRECTLY WITH THE ORTHODOX CHURCH.

[1](#)3. (C) CONTRARY TO THE CLAIM REPORTED REF. B, THE HOLY SEE DOES NOT BELIEVE IT MISSTEPPED IN CREATING THE FOUR DIOCESES THAT THE GOR CLAIMS TRIGGERED THE RECENT RASH OF VISA REFUSALS/EXPULSIONS OF CATHOLIC CLERGY. THEY MAINTAIN THAT ESTABLISHING THE DIOCESES WAS A NORMAL AND LONG OVERDUE RESPONSE TO AN ABNORMAL SITUATION FOR THE CATHOLIC FAITHFUL IN RUSSIA. BALESTRERO DID CONCEDE THAT MANY IN RUSSIA UNFORTUNATELY DID NOT UNDERSTAND JUST HOW ROUTINE AN ACT THE UPGRADING WAS. HE SPECULATED THAT SOME LOCAL RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CLERGY MAY HAVE EXPRESSED CONCERN TO LOCAL GOR OFFICIALS BASED ON A MISUNDERSTANDING OF THE MOVE, AND THAT THOSE CONCERNS COULD HAVE BEEN PASSED UP TO CENTRAL AUTHORITIES. IN THE HOLY SEE'S VIEW THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CLERGY AND SOME IN THE RUSSIAN GOVERNMENT WERE LOOKING FOR AN EXCUSE TO SUPPRESS THE CATHOLIC CLERGY, AND GOT IT WHEN THE HOLY SEE UPGRADED THE APOSTOLIC ADMINISTRATIONS TO DIOCESES. HE BELIEVED THAT IF THE HOLY SEE HADN'T MADE THE DIOCESAN DECISION, SOMETHING ELSE WOULD HAVE SERVED AS THE OCCASION FOR THE ACTIONS. AT THE END OF THE DAY, HE STRESSED, THE VISAS AND ENTRY PERMITS WERE REFUSED BY CIVIL, NOT CHURCH AUTHORITIES, IN VIOLATION OF RUSSIA'S SOLEMN INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS.

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[1](#)4. (SBU) COMMENT: THERE ARE VERY FEW APOSTOLIC ADMINISTRATIONS ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD. MOST ARE IN PLACES LIKE PRIZREN IN KOSOVO, OR THE CORMOROS. ALL OF THEM ARE SEEN TO BE TEMPORARY MEASURES UNTIL THE MORE NORMAL CONDITION OF A DIOCESE IS ESTABLISHED. THE CREATION OF A DIOCESE

ESSENTIALLY GIVES ITS BISHOP MORE AUTONOMY FOR THE DAY-TO-DAY RUNNING OF CHURCH AFFAIRS. THE HOLY SEE UNDERTOOK NUMEROUS MEASURES TO ALLEVIATE ANY HEARTBURN BY THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH WHEN CREATING THESE DIOCESES AFTER MORE THAN A DECADE OF APOSTOLIC ADMINISTRATION. FOR EXAMPLE, THEY AVOIDED NAMING THEM FOR THEIR SEES, AS IN &MOSCOW,8 SO THAT THERE WOULD NOT BE A CATHOLIC BISHOP OF MOSCOW AT THE SAME TIME AS THERE WAS AN ORTHODOX BISHOP OF MOSCOW. AND IN SAKHALIN, THEY NAMED A POLE, BISHOP MAZUR, INSTEAD OF THE JAPANESE, BISHOP PETER JINUSHI, PRECISELY TO AVOID ANY IMPLICATION THAT THE HOLY SEE SUPPORTS THE RETURN OF SOUTHERN SAKHALIN TO JAPAN. NEVERTHELESS, THE HOLY SEE FEELS STRONGLY THAT THE CHURCH HAS TO TAKE CARE OF ITS OWN BUSINESS IN RUSSIA AS ELSEWHERE, AND CANNOT SACRIFICE ITS PASTORAL REQUIREMENTS INDEFINITELY TO PLACATE THE UNFOUNDED FEARS OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH.

15. (SBU) COMMENT CONTINUED: WHILE THE HOLY SEE IS WILLING TO TAKE AN INDIRECT APPROACH AT THE OSCE TO ADVANCE THE CAUSE

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ACTION EUR-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	CIAE-00	DODE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00
	EB-00	ED-01	FBIE-00	VC-00	HHS-01	H-01	TEDE-00
	INR-00	IO-00	LAB-01	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01	NSAE-00
	NSCE-00	OIC-02	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00
	ACE-00	P-00	SCT-00	SP-00	SSO-00	STR-00	TRSE-00
	USIE-00	IIP-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	PRM-00	DRL-02	G-00
	SAS-00	/011W					

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INFO EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

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OF ITS CLERGY, IT DOES REGARD RUSSIAN ACTIONS AS AN INCREASINGLY SERIOUS INFRINGEMENT ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM. GIVEN THE CENTRAL ROLE THAT RELIGIOUS FREEDOM HAS PLAYED IN JOHN PAUL II'S PONTIFICATE, THE HOLY SEE CAN BE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE TO PRESS ITS CASE ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM GROUNDS UNTIL
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IT ACHIEVES A BETTER ACCOMMODATION WITH RUSSIAN AUTHORITIES.

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